

PUTNAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



117 Putnam Drive, Suite A ♦ Eatonton, GA 31024

Minutes

Friday, November 7, 2025 ♦ 10:00 AM

Putnam County Administration Building – Room 203

The Putnam County Board of Commissioners met on Friday, November 7, 2025 at approximately 10:00 AM in the Putnam County Administration Building, 117 Putnam Drive, Room 203, Eatonton, Georgia.

PRESENT

Chairman Bill Sharp
Commissioner Tom McElhenney
Commissioner Richard Garrett
Commissioner Steve Hersey (arrived late)
Commissioner Jeff Wooten

STAFF PRESENT

County Attorney Adam Nelson
County Clerk Lynn Butterworth
Deputy County Clerk Mercy Fluker

STAFF ABSENT

County Manager Paul Van Haute

Opening

1. Welcome - Call to Order

Chairman Sharp called the meeting to order at approximately 10:01 a.m.

(Copy of agenda made a part of the minutes on minute book page _____.)

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Wooten

Commissioner Hersey arrived at approximately 10:02 a.m.

3. Invocation

Pastor Tim Oliver, Lakeside Baptist Church, gave the invocation.

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4. Pledge of Allegiance (JW)

Commissioner Wooten led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Regular Business Meeting

5. Public Comments

Mr. Billy Webster displayed photos and commented about the guardrail at Avant Road and Twin Bridges Road.

Mr. Phillip Uzzo displayed photos of his mailbox located on Gregory Lane and commented about the difficulties he faces when it rains due to the red dirt.

Mr. Bill Vargo commented about the recent moratorium.

(Copy of photos made a part of the minutes on minute book pages _____ to _____.)

6. Consent Agenda

a. Approval of Minutes - October 21, 2025 Regular Business Meeting (staff-CC)

b. Approval of Minutes - October 22, 2025 Work Session (staff-CC)

c. Approval of 2025 Alcohol License (staff-CC)

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey, Commissioner Wooten

(Copy of Alcohol License made a part of the minutes on minute book page _____.)

7. Discussion and possible action on holding the Smithsonian Voices and Votes: Democracy in America Exhibition in BOC Room 203 (staff-CM)

Ms. Melissa Swindell from the Georgia Writers Museum presented information about the exhibition and their request to host the exhibition in Putnam County Administration Building Room 203 or the Atrium, which will include local artifacts and stories. She explained the exhibition will run from April 20, 2026 through May 31, 2026 but the days and times are open for discussion.

Motion to allow the Smithsonian Voices and Votes: Democracy in America Exhibition to be held in the Putnam County Administration Building from April 20, 2026 through May 31, 2026.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey, Commissioner Wooten

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8. Authorization for Chairman to sign the Final Plat for Phase One of the Publix Development (staff-CM and P&D)

County Attorney Nelson explained the request for approval of the final plat which includes a bond for the incomplete infrastructure as allowed by the Putnam County Code of Ordinances. Mr. Rick McAllister, agent for Lake Country Retail Investors LLC, commented on the plat and explained the scheduled work to be done along with the costs to complete, including relocating a transmission pole, an additional curb cut, and final road paving.

Mr. Adam Shaifer, representing the owner and developer of the project, expressed his excitement for the project and his appreciation for the board's consideration of the final plat.

Motion to authorize the Chairman to sign the Final Plat for Phase One of the Publix Development.

Motion made by Commissioner Garrett, Seconded by Commissioner McElhenney.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey, Commissioner Wooten

(Copy of plat made a part of the minutes on minute book page _____.)

9. Report from the Jimmy Davis Park Partnership Advisory Committee and possible action. Jimmy Davis Park Partnership Advisory Committee Chairperson Janie Reid presented the Quarterly Report and Executive Summary.

Chairperson Reid presented a memo to the commissioners requesting to dissolve the Jimmy Davis Park Partnership Advisory Committee effective immediately.

Motion to dissolve the Jimmy Davis Park Partnership Advisory Committee effective today.

Motion made by Commissioner Garrett, Seconded by Commissioner McElhenney.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Wooten

Voting Nay: Commissioner Hersey

Chairman Sharp concurred.

(Copy of documents made a part of the minutes on minute book pages _____ to _____.)

10. Approval of FY 2025 Budget Amendment #2 (staff-Finance)

Assistant Finance Director Jennifer Fricks explained the changes made to balance the budget.

Motion to approve the FY 2025 Budget Amendment #2.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey, Commissioner Wooten

(Copy of budget amendment made a part of the minutes on minute book pages _____ to _____.)

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11. Appointments to the Lake Oconee Area Development Authority (staff-CC)
Chairman Sharp explained there are 2 vacancies and 3 applicants for the Lake Oconee Area Development Authority. These are five-year terms ending November 7, 2030.

Mr. Barry Chambers was nominated for appointment to the Lake Oconee Area Development Authority.

Nomination made by Commissioner Wooten, Seconded by Commissioner Hersey.

Mr. Kevin Beasley was nominated for appointment to the Lake Oconee Area Development Authority.

Nomination made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

Mr. Nick Marine was nominated for appointment to the Lake Oconee Area Development Authority.

Nomination made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

Chairman Sharp called for the vote for the first vacancy. Commissioner McElhenney voted for Barry Chambers. Commissioner Garrett voted for Barry Chambers. Commissioner Hersey voted for Barry Chambers. Commissioner Wooten voted for Barry Chambers.

Chairman Sharp called for the vote for the second vacancy. Commissioner McElhenney voted for Nick Marine. Commissioner Garrett voted for Nick Marine. Commissioner Hersey voted for Kevin Beasley. Commissioner Wooten voted for Nick Marine.

Mr. Barry Chambers and Mr. Nick Marine were appointed to the Lake Oconee Area Development Authority.

12. Authorization for Chairman to sign a Resolution to Request Local Legislation to Amend the Local Act Creating the Board of Commissioners for Putnam County to Establish the Procedure for Vacancies in Office ("Gary McElhenney Resolution") (staff-CM)
County Attorney Nelson explained the resolution and some potential changes to be made regarding who is allowed to fill the vacancies and tiebreakers.

Motion to table this item until the November 18, 2025 Regular Business Meeting when a revised request is prepared and provided to the Board of Commissioners.

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey, Commissioner Wooten

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13. Discussion and possible action to place up to a six month moratorium on Data Centers (SH)
Ms. Jennifer Ray commented in favor of a moratorium on data centers.

Mr. Bill Vargo commented against a moratorium on data centers.

Ms. Barb Vargo commented against a moratorium on data centers.

Chairman Sharp informed the board that the Middle Georgia Regional Commission has been requested to analyze data centers and present the facts before any decisions are made.

Commissioner Hersey explained the need for data centers and battery storage units to be done properly and requested the Middle Georgia Regional Commission to provide information regarding what regulations are needed, as well as the need for a separate ordinance that includes regulations on insulation for noise, size, and adequate sources of income.

County Attorney Nelson provided the definitions for data centers and battery energy storage systems.

Motion for the Board of Commissioners to place a county-wide moratorium for up to six months on data centers and battery storage facilities.

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

Voting Yea: Commissioner Hersey

Voting Nay: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Wooten

Motion failed.

Motion for staff to draft an ordinance that regulates data centers and battery storage facilities and seek public input and commissioner approval within 3 months of today's date.

Motion made by Commissioner Garrett, Seconded by Commissioner McElhenney.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Wooten

Voting Nay: Commissioner Hersey

Meeting recessed at approximately 12:31 p.m.

Meeting reconvened at approximately 12:44 p.m.

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14. Discussion and possible action to formalize an optional response by board members to public comment (RG)

Mr. Bill Vargo commented that commissioner responses could be a good idea.

Ms. Barb Vargo commented that commissioner responses could turn into a long discussion.

Commissioner Garrett explained the idea from both perspectives, as a citizen and a commissioner.

Motion that the relevant portion of the Putnam County code Section 2-42 be amended to read “At the conclusion of public comments, the chairperson will give board members and staff the opportunity to offer a brief response to one or more public comments. There is no obligation for board members or staff to respond to or address comments made by members of the public.”

Motion made by Commissioner Garrett, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

Voting Yea: Commissioner Garrett

Voting Nay: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Hersey, Commissioner Wooten

Motion failed.

No action taken.

15. Discussion and possible action to restrict the current Putnam County moratorium on all new rezoning applications to north of Highway 16 (RG)

Mr. Bill Vargo commented in favor of leaving the moratorium as it stands or cancelling it completely.

Ms. Barb Vargo commented that the moratoriums need to stop.

Commissioner Garrett explained the need to focus the moratorium on the half of Putnam County that has generated the most development, problems, and concerns of over development, as well as not to inhibit the rest of the county that does not have comparable problems.

Motion to end the current Putnam County moratorium on all new rezoning applications south of Highway 16 and west of 441.

Motion made by Commissioner Garrett, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

Voting Yea: Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey, Commissioner Wooten

Voting Nay: Commissioner McElhenney

16. Discussion and possible action to schedule a Town Hall meeting to allow for public comment to inform the BOC's ongoing "Development" discussions. Proposed Date: Thursday

December 4th at 6 p.m. (RG)

Motion to schedule a Town Hall meeting to allow for public comment to inform the Board of Commissioners' ongoing “Development” discussion. Proposed date: January 22, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

Motion made by Commissioner Garrett, Seconded by Commissioner McElhenney.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey, Commissioner Wooten

Reports/Announcements

17. County Manager Report

No report due to County Manager Van Haute's absence.

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18. County Attorney Report

No report.

19. Commissioner Announcements

Commissioner McElhenney: reminded everyone that cold weather is coming, be prepared and vigilant

Commissioner Garrett: commented that he is pleased that SPLOST 10 passed and thanked those who voted; congratulated Butler Baker Alumni Association for a successful Octoberfest and the Georgia Writers Museum for a successful Haunted Eatonton

Commissioner Hersey: none

Commissioner Wooten: none

Chairman Sharp: reminded everyone about the Mistletoe Market in Downtown Eatonton this Saturday

Closing

20. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey, Commissioner Wooten

Meeting adjourned at approximately 1:29 p.m.

ATTEST:

Mercy Fluker
Deputy County Clerk

B. W. "Bill" Sharp
Chairman

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